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LETTER DATED 31 DECEMBER 1996 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF IRAQ TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

On instructions from my Government, I have the honour to inform you of the following provocative acts carried out by United States military vessels against Iraqi civilian craft:

1. At 1200 hours on 20 December 1996, the American frigate Steven Groven launched a rubber boat with 10 armed personnel, who then boarded the two Iraqi vessels 7 Nisan and Al-Wuhda, towing the Iraqi dredger Al-Marbad, at a distance of five nautical miles south-east of Mina' Al-Bakr. They carried out a thorough search of both boats and the dredger which lasted until 1600 hours of the same day.

2. At 1615 hours on the same day, the same rubber boat and personnel approached the Iraqi fishing boat Al-Zubaydi while it was fishing in the area mentioned above. They boarded the vessel, assembling its crew in the bow before carrying out a search of the vessel and taking a sample of its fuel. At 1750 hours on the same day, the search operation ended and the personnel left the vessel.

I request your intervention with the Government of the United States, in accordance with your responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations, with a view to halting and preventing any repetition of these provocative acts undertaken by American military vessels against Iraqi civilian craft. Such hostile actions constitute a violation of the Charter of the United Nations and the provisions of international law.

I also wish to reaffirm the legally established right of the Republic of Iraq to receive compensation for the damage caused to its property as a result of such unjustified American acts, in accordance with the principles of international responsibility.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Nizar HAMDOON
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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